

HIGHLIGHTS NEEDLES FIELD OFFICE

California Desert District Advisory Council Meeting

March 14 – 15, 2014

First Solar Stateline Solar Farm

BLM Action: Desert Stateline, LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of First Solar Development, Inc. (First Solar) proposes to develop and construct a 300-megawatt (MW) alternating current (AC) solar photovoltaic (PV) energy generating project known as the Stateline Solar Farm (Project). The PV generating facility (Solar Farm), the corridor for the Project's 220-kilovolt (kV) generation interconnection (gen-tie) transmission line, and the access road would be located in western Ivanpah Valley, east of Interstate 15 and northeast of the Ivanpah Solar Electric Generation System project. The proposed project would include the solar farm, an on-site substation, the 220 kV gen-tie line within the Utility Corridor, and an access road. The project would connect to the Southern California Edison (SCE) regional transmission grid via SCE's Ivanpah Substation. First Solar proposed Alternative 1 would encompass 2,143 acres. The Bureau's preferred alternative, Alternative 3, would reconfigure the Alternative 1 boundary to improve desert tortoise connectivity corridors and encompass 2,150 acres.

Contacts: Jeffery Childers, Project Manager
Mike Ahrens, Field Manager

Agencies: California Desert District Renewable Energy Action Team and Needles Field Office

Status: A Final Environmental Impact Statement has been approved and the Record of Decision was issued on Feb 14, 2014. Right of Way has been offered to First Solar for the construction and operation of the facility. NEFO is now preparing for the construction phase where the NEFO role will focus on compliance with the Terms and Conditions of the ROW Grant.

Ivanpah Solar Electric Generation System

BLM Action: Solar Partners', LLC are in the process of constructing the Ivanpah Solar Electric Generation System, a concentrated solar electrical generating facility capable of generating 370 megawatts (MW) of renewable power. The project will be located in Ivanpah Valley, southwest of Primm, Nevada, and consist of three power plants, Ivanpah 1, Ivanpah 2 and Ivanpah 3. Shared facilities include a substation and natural gas pipeline. The three independent power plants and shared substation will be co-located on approximately 3,671 acres of Bureau administered public land.

Contacts: Mike Ahrens, Field Manager

Agencies: BLM, Needles Field Office

Status: Construction of the facility is complete. Solar Partners celebrated the completion of the facility and the commencement of power production on Feb 12-13, 2014. Operation of the facility has been turned over to NRG Energy Services. NEFO is already working with NRG to complete a few mitigation projects and monitor operational compliance.

Eldorado-Ivanpah Transmission Project

BLM Action: Southern California Edison's Eldorado-Ivanpah Transmission Project will consist of replacing an existing 115kV transmission line with a new double circuit 230kV electric transmission line, building a new Ivanpah substation, and building new fiber optics telecommunications facilities.

The transmission line will handle projected electricity produced from up to 13 proposed renewable energy projects in and around the Ivanpah and Eldorado Valleys, in addition to the Ivanpah Solar Energy Generation System being constructed by Solar Partners, LLC. The electric transmission line and a new substation will be constructed within an existing designated utility corridor.

Contacts: Mike Ahrens, Field Manager

Agencies: BLM, Needles Field Office - lead
BLM, Las Vegas Field Office

Status: The transmission line upgrade is complete.

I-15 Joint Point of Entry

BLM Action: The state of California will construct and operate a Joint Port of Entry (JPOE) on Interstate 15 located in Ivanpah Valley, southwest of Primm, Nevada. The JPOE will include an Agricultural Inspection Facility and a Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Facility. Upon completion of the project, all traffic entering California on the southbound I-15 will be diverted through the JPOE.

Contact: Karen Montgomery, Realty Specialist
Mike Ahrens, Field Manager

Agencies BLM, Needles Field Office - lead
Caltrans - roads and traffic control
California Department of Food and Agriculture - agricultural inspection facility
California Department of General Services - state facilities administration

California Highway Patrol - commercial vehicle enforcement facility

Status: The land required of the JPOE has been patented to the State of California. They have taken possession and have begun construction.

Route 66 5-Mile Interpretive Center

BLM Action: The NEFO has authorized the construction of an Interpretive Center at the intersection of I40 and 5-Mile Rd. The site represents the start of east bound R66 travel in California. The site will include a ramada, picnic tables, kiosk, BLM Image sign, and landscaping.

Agencies: BLM, Needles Field Office

Contact: Mike Ahrens, Field Manager

Status: NEFO is preparing for construction of the facility. Construction will be complete by the end of March. The DAC will be notified of grand opening ceremonies when as plans become available.

Camp Iron Mtn

BLM Action: The NEFO is considering opportunities to further protection and interpretation of the Camp Iron site. Camp Iron Mtn was one of the Divisional Camps at the Desert Training Center where our troops trained during WWII. Measures could include Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, development of interpretive facilities, brochures, web based education materials, interpretive walks etc.

Agencies: BLM Needles Field Office

Contact: Mike Ahrens, Field Manager

Status: There is an ACEC Management plan that was prepared for Camp Iron Mtn in 1984. Additionally, there is a wealth of information stored in the Needles Field Office from an outreach campaign that culminated in hundreds of letters from soldiers that trained at the Desert Training Center. NEFO staff is reviewing those materials and will either update the Camp Iron Mtn ACEC plan or tier off of it to enhance protection and interpretation of the site.

Abandoned Mine Lands

BLM Action: The NFO is actively pursuing inventories, prioritization and closures of abandoned mines that may present a public safety hazard.

Agencies: BLM, Needles Field Office with support from the California Desert District and California Department of Conservation

Contact: Sterling White, CDD AML
Mike Ahrens, Field Manager

Status: The NFO has closed 14 openings and repaired one bat gate at the Umberci Mine. Several features have been identified in the Western Whipple Mountains that may present hazards to winter visitors in that area. Bat surveys and other natural and cultural resource surveys are being conducted as funds and staffing allow for the development of a NEPA document and a possible contract for the closures. Much of the inventory work and bat surveys are accomplished by contractors, staff, and volunteers.

Partnerships

Chicago Botanical Garden – The NFO has decided to defer its involvement in the Seeds of Success program until next spring due to funding/staffing uncertainties. We look forward to more robust involvement next spring.

Amargosa Conservancy - The NFO and the Amargosa Conservancy (AC) are working together in protective and conservation efforts at Crystal Springs, Wildhorse Spring, and Horse Thief Springs in the Kingston Range. AC has provided cleanup efforts and are “eyes and ears” for the field office in this remote area.

California Trail Users Coalition - The NFO has entered into an agreement with the California Trail Users Coalition (CTUC) to extend their successful map series to include the NFO. This will include the development of three maps covering our jurisdiction. The maps will be available through the CTUC distribution network and at the NFO. The project is funded through a grant from the California Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division.

Two of the three map series covering the Needles Field Office jurisdiction have been completed and are now available through the CTUC, the Needles Field Office. The NFO has also initiated a distribution network utilizing local RV Resorts along the Colorado River.

All maps will use a comprehensive route network, developed by staff based on the designated open route system for the map series. This network highlights long distance touring opportunities and access to recreational points of interest. The routes are marked; those with assigned names have been marked with stickers showing the names and numbers that correspond to labels on the maps.

Great Basin Institute – The NFO has entered into an agreement with the Great Basin Institute to provide a Research Associate to support our GIS needs on several wilderness monitoring and characteristic inventory projects. The Research Associate will be funded through an OHMVR grant and will support the project for the remainder of the fiscal year.